

V I R G I N I A:

HOUSE OF DELEGATES

COUNTY OF AUGUSTA

CHAIRMAN:

DELEGATE CHRIS JONES

• • • • •

April 2, 2011
10:00 AM

PUBLIC HEARING:

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P. O. BOX 12628

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APPEARANCES:

Senator Mary Margaret Whipple
 Senator Harry B. Blevins
 Delegate Chris Jones, Chairman
 Delegate John M. O'Bannon, III
 Delegate R. Steven Landes
 Delegate Rosalyn R. Dance
 Delegate Rob Bell
 Delegate Johnny S. Joannou
 Delegate Todd Gilbert
 Delegate Tony O. Wilt

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1 The following came on to be heard at
2 the Government Center in Verona, Virginia on April 2,
3 2011 before the Virginia House of Delegates with
4 Delegate Chris Jones, as Chairman.

5 All formalities as to caption certificate
6 and Notice of Filing were waived. It was agreed that
7 Alecia M. Scorsone, Notary Public in and for the
8 Commonwealth of Virginia at Large would take said
9 Public Hearing in machine shorthand and reduce the
10 same to writing by means for computer-aided
11 transcription and sign the name of the witness
12 thereto.

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18 MR. JONES: I'll call the meeting to
19 order. I would like to thank everyone who is
20 in attendance this morning.

21 This is a joint meeting, as you well
22 know, of the House and Senate Committees on
23 Privilege and Elections on redistricting.

24 Ladies and gentlemen, colleagues and

1 engaged citizens, good morning, it's my
2 pleasure. I wanted to welcome you, my name is
3 Chris Jones and I serve in the House of
4 Delegates from the City of Suffolk.

5 This is the first of three today that
6 six of us will do around the Commonwealth. We
7 will go to Abingdon after we leave here and
8 then on to Danville.

9 There is another public hearing in
10 Northern Virginia today. And then on Monday
11 at ten o'clock, we will have a final public
12 hearing at the Capital at the General Assembly
13 Building at ten o'clock on Monday. With, I
14 believe, action by, I know at least the House
15 P and E Committee on Monday afternoon on House
16 Bill 5001, which is my bill.

17 We're here this morning to seek input
18 from the citizens, from elected officials and
19 concerned citizens, about the two plans that
20 are before -- well, I think there are three
21 plans that have been posted on the House Bill
22 5001, which will redistrict the one hundred
23 districts in the House of Delegates.

24 And I don't know if they have Senate

1 Bill numbers yet; but a Senate Bill introduced
2 by Senator Howell, and a Senate Bill
3 introduced by Senator John Watkins.

4 The General Assembly and the Governor,
5 as officials who submit to the voters and
6 elections and therefore are directly
7 accountable to the public, are responsible for
8 drawing the legislative boundaries.

9 That mandate is clearly spelled out in
10 the Virginia Constitution which each of us
11 takes an oath to uphold. It is one of the
12 most important duties that we have as elected
13 government officials, and it is a time tested
14 process updating these boundaries every ten
15 years, and it ensures that every Virginian has
16 a voice in redistricting.

17 Last fall the House and Senate P and E
18 Committees proactively sought to foster
19 greater citizen engagement and involvement
20 through six public hearings across Virginia.

21 This unprecedented action then
22 underscore and desire to encourage greater
23 civic awareness and facilitate a more active
24 participation by the public in Virginia's 2011

1 redistricting process, and that commitment
2 continues.

3 The primary difference between last
4 years six and this years eight public
5 hearings, is that now there are actual bills,
6 and that's before us as I have just mentioned.

7 We have three so far. Both the House
8 and Senate plans draw districts of equal
9 population as nearly as practicable and
10 accordance of the constitutional principle of
11 one person and one vote.

12 The House plan deviates from its ideal
13 size of 80,010 by plus or minus one percent.
14 The Howell plan deviates from its ideal
15 population of about 200,000 by plus or minus
16 two percent. Whereas the Senator Watkins plan
17 deviates by plus or minus a hand percent or a
18 total deviation of one percent.

19 The introduced House and Senate plans
20 also maintain other traditional redistricting
21 principles; such as compactness, contiguity,
22 respect for the communities of interest,
23 political subdivision of boundaries and full
24 compliance of the voting rights and all other

1 applicable federal and state law, as well as
2 the important decision of applying them.

3 But that's enough from me. I would like
4 to, as I said in the beginning, I would like
5 to have input from the citizens. We are here
6 on their several logistical requests to ensure
7 a smooth and efficient process of the public
8 input as possible.

9 In order to respect the time of everyone
10 who is here to provide input, I ask that each
11 of you state your name and your address.
12 Again, please keep your remarks at about four
13 minutes, if possible.

14 If someone has already stated what you
15 would like to state, and you would just like
16 to echo that, that will be fine. The other
17 night we had over thirty speakers in Hampton,
18 which I thought was a wonderful turnout.

19 So, anyone who has not signed up and
20 wishes to speak after you have heard some
21 other comments, please stand up and just share
22 with us what you will.

23 We are here to listen. We will not
24 engage in a discussion or answer questions.

1 We will take your comments and if you have,
2 like we had on Thursday night, we had a
3 registrar who provided maps of changes that
4 they felt would be pertinent to the individual
5 plans that had been introduced. We will
6 certainly receive them and look at those
7 between now and Monday.

8 With that, we have two that have signed
9 up to speak this morning. We have Mr. Joe
10 Paxton who is with Rockingham County. Good
11 morning.

12 MR. PAXTON: Good morning, Mr. Chairman.
13 Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for the
14 opportunity to speak today.

15 My name is Joe Paxton, I'm the County
16 Administrator for Rockingham County. My
17 address is 400 South Sunset Drive Broadway,
18 Virginia.

19 I'm here today to speak to you regarding
20 a proposed revision between District 26 and
21 District 15, in regards to some adjustments
22 related to the town of Timberville annexation.

23 Timberville is a town located in
24 northern Rockingham County and over the last

1 number of years, has made several annexations
2 regarding a growth plan in and around the
3 town.

4 The proposal would shift those areas
5 from Delegate Gilbert's District into Delegate
6 Wilt's District. And because both of those
7 gentlemen's districts under the proposed plans
8 submitted to the House are very close to the
9 ideal, the one percent over, we have made some
10 adjustments in Delegate Wilt's District in the
11 Plains Precinct, which is already split.

12 To swing that area around a little bit
13 further to the north and west. And I have
14 copies of this information as well as a
15 listing of the census blocks that we would
16 like to have shifted from one to the other.

17 I have already provided copies to the
18 Delegates from Rockingham's jurisdiction and I
19 have a number of other copies here available
20 if you would like them, Mr. Chairman.

21 MR. JONES: If you would provide them to
22 David, please. I like a detailed person.

23 MR. PAXTON: The result of this change
24 currently in District 15, it has 80,528. You

1 would shift 409 to District 26, and receive
2 from District 26, 414, which would leave a
3 revised total of 80,533.

4 In House District 26, it currently has
5 80,790. To District 15 would be 414 from
6 District 15 would be 409, which would leave
7 80,785. Thank you.

8 MR. JONES: Thank you. Before we
9 proceed, it has been brought to my attention
10 that I should have done this. To my left if
11 we could have the members introduce
12 themselves.

13 MR. GILBERT: Sure, Delegate Todd
14 Gilbert from Woodstock.

15 MR. JOANNOU: Delegate Johnny Joannou
16 from the 79th District, which includes
17 Norfolk, Portsmouth, Suffolk and Chesapeake.

18 MR. BELL: Delegate Rob Bell, which
19 includes Albemarle, Fluvanna, Greene and
20 Orange.

21 MR. BLEVINS: Senator Harry Blevins, I
22 represent the 14th Senate District, which is
23 part of Chesapeake and part of Virginia beach.

24 MR. LANDES: Delegate Steve Landes.

1 Welcome to Augusta County. I represent
2 currently the 25th House District, which is
3 part of Augusta, part of Albemarle, part of
4 Rockingham and currently the City of
5 Waynesboro.

6 MS. DANCE: Good morning, Delegate
7 Rosalyn Dance representing the 63rd District,
8 which encompasses the County of Dinwiddie,
9 parts of the County of Chesterfield, Ettrick
10 and Matoaca, and the City of Petersburg.

11 MS. WHIPPLE: I'm Senator Mary Margaret
12 Whipple from Arlington. My district is most
13 of Arlington, the City of Falls Church and a
14 portion of eastern Fairfax County.

15 MR. O'BANNON: Good morning, my name is
16 John O'Bannon. And as of today my district is
17 part of Henrico County and two Precincts in
18 the City of Richmond. I'm glad you're here.

19 MR. JONES: Thank you. Joe, before you
20 come back up, we do have two other members of
21 the House with us today.

22 We have Delegate Wilt and we have
23 Delegate Bell. Gentlemen, thank you for
24 joining us today, anything else you would like

1 to add?

2 MR. PAXTON: Just for the Record, I did
3 provide Delegate Landes a small adjustment
4 between him and Delegate Wilt.

5 There are no people that live in that
6 district, it was a town boundary adjustment
7 for the town of Bridgewater. It just needs to
8 be adjusted to correctly depict that town.

9 MR. JONES: I'll take care of that for
10 you.

11 MR. PAXTON: Thank you, sir.

12 MR. JONES: Thank you very much. Thank
13 you for being here this morning.

14 Next we have Austin Garber from the Town
15 of Timberville. Welcome, good morning.

16 MR. GARBER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
17 Good morning ladies and gentlemen, Austin
18 Cooper Garber, the second.

19 I'm the town manager for the town of
20 Timberville. My address is 16782 Little Dry
21 River Road, Fulks Run, Virginia.

22 I want to thank you all for providing
23 this forum. It's nice to have something close
24 that we can get to instead of traveling across

1 the state, which is often the case.

2 I will start off by saying that
3 Timberville supports the modifications that
4 Mr. Paxton and his staff have worked hard on
5 and put together in this proposed revision.

6 There were two main points of how the
7 initial proposed redistricting boundaries
8 would have negatively affected the Town of
9 Timberville.

10 We went through an annexation about four
11 years ago and there are certain citizens that
12 were annexed into the town who have had
13 confusion or have experienced confusion
14 because of Zip Code changes, which isn't your
15 concern, but they have had this confusion.

16 And we think that adding another line
17 through there is just going to add more
18 confusion for those residents.

19 The second thing is, I will always argue
20 that small governments, small local
21 governments, are the most efficient form of
22 government.

23 No disrespect to the Delegates involved,
24 but I really only want to talk to one of you

1 all about the things that affects the towns.

2 And I think if we have to have different
3 areas of town divided up into different
4 districts, it's going to affect what we have
5 to go through, and different legislation that
6 has to be proposed.

7 Like I say, I really support the
8 revisions that the County has put forward, and
9 thank you all for the time.

10 MR. JONES: Anyone else wishing to speak
11 this morning? Yes, sir; please come forward.

12 MR. CLEM: Yes, thank you very much.
13 I'm Andrew Clem, I teach at the Central
14 Virginia Community College, I live in
15 Staunton.

16 I have a proposal. My class has been
17 studying the redistricting issue and my
18 students did their own exercise, similar as
19 you're probably aware, to the state-wide
20 competition. They weren't party of the
21 competition per say.

22 But anyway, I would like to submit, as I
23 promised I would, their proposals as well as
24 my own suggestions. I would just like to, if

1 I may, highlight certain considerations I hope
2 you take very seriously.

3 The Constitution, as you mentioned, does
4 state that the district shall be contiguous
5 and compact. Some of the proposals I have
6 seen do not fit those criteria at all.

7 Again, at a time when the Constitution
8 is at such a major political issue, I think it
9 would be very important to adhere consistently
10 to that standard.

11 It would certainly make my students feel
12 more like the people who lead them take them
13 seriously.

14 Anyway, the specific suggestion I have
15 in essence, redo the 5th District in such a
16 way to leading the Congressional District to
17 incorporate Lynchburg as its center. That's
18 sort of a national commercial hub anyway.

19 When they had the debate last year
20 between the incumbent, Tom Perriello, and the
21 challenger, Robert Hurt, they had the debate
22 in Lynchburg. Which, even though it's outside
23 the 5th District, it was a natural place for
24 all of the people. So it seems to me that

1 should be something that should be considered.

2 Otherwise, what I tried to do for the
3 most part is to avoid splitting counties
4 unless it's necessary.

5 The reason is, I think when counties are
6 split, it tends to confuse voters and it
7 raises doubt in their mind as to where they
8 belong.

9 And that in turn, has the affect of
10 undermining the ideal of popular
11 representation. Because people are confused
12 about their own identity and who represents
13 them, it undermines the democracy.

14 Anyway, if I may, I would like to submit
15 my own proposal here and my students.

16 MR. JONES: Thank you very much.
17 Anything else?

18 MR. CLEM: I think that covers it, thank
19 you.

20 MR. JONES: Well please thank your
21 students for their proposals and we will
22 certainly look at them. Thank you for coming
23 this morning.

24 MR. CLEM: I appreciate your time.

1 MR. JONES: Is there anyone else wishing
2 to speak this morning?

3 Before the committee rises, I would just
4 like to comment that the reason that we're
5 having these public hearings across the
6 Commonwealth is to receive local input.

7 When someone is looking at a drawing of
8 a map, you don't always have the underground
9 local knowledge. So the input from the town
10 and county really makes a big difference to us
11 as we make sure that we represent the people
12 that we all represent, whether it's local
13 government, state government or federal
14 government.

15 With that, I do want to thank you for
16 your time today, and hope you have a blessed
17 day.

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21
22 Alecia M. Scorsone
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C E R T I F I C A T E

COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA

COUNTY OF ROANOKE

I, Alecia M. Scorsone, Notary Public in and for the Commonwealth of Virginia, at Large, do hereby certify that the Virginia House of Delegates Public Hearing was by me reduced to machine shorthand in the presence of the witness, afterwards transcribed under my direction by means of computer, and that to the best of my ability the foregoing is a true and correct transcript of the Hearing as aforesaid.

I further certify that this Hearing was taken at the time and place in the foregoing caption specified.

I further certify that I am not a relative, counsel or attorney for either party or otherwise interested in the outcome of this action.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand at Roanoke, Virginia, on this the 3rd day of April , 2011.

Alecia M. Scorsone
Notary Public No. 7300248

My commission expires January 31, 2013.